

dNOTES FROM STURGEON ADVISORY COMMITTEE, AUGUST 27, 2018

Action Items:

1) Ryan Koenigs – email website link and dedicated email address to advisory committee members

2) Check into alternative meeting location in Stevens Point – Schmeeckle Reserve

NOTE: Schmeeckle Reserve website suggests meeting room in the visitor center can hold up to 40 people. Online calendar has the room booked on Sept. 27, the afternoon of Oct. 29th, and evening of Dec 4th. Can book dates online (https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/schmeeckle/Pages/facility_use/meeting.aspx) or call the visitor center at 715-346-4992.

Breakout Sessions related Action Items:

1) Breakout session 1 – Vision Statement

- Mock up 2-3 different options for a vision statement to go to a vote and/or be edited by group for next meeting.

2) Breakout session 2 – Issues

- Compile group results (NOTE: compiled herein to start), identify consistencies, priorities, ranking

Ryan began the meeting and described species management teams within WDNR, then we moved into introductions of the WDNR sturgeon management team with each member outlining the scope of their sturgeon management responsibilities. Next, the other non-DNR members of the advisory committee gave their introductions.

Ryan re-iterated the importance of communication in this process and reminded folks to leave their contact info on the sign-in sheet. Dedicated website and email address were shown, and Ryan will follow up and send this information to the group. Ryan emphasized importance of reading previous plan and review document.

Ryan described the agenda for the meeting (pp slide) and talked about the diverse array of stakeholders invited/represented on the advisory committee and how we came up with the list that we invited. Ryan asked if anyone was present from a group not listed on the pp slide.

Ryan discussed the role of the advisory committee and the potential workload involved with serving on the committee. Ground rules for serving on the committee were discussed, with importance placed on all respecting each other's view points as well as the importance of consensus. Ryan also emphasized that the committee is advisory in nature and not a decision-making body.

Joseph discussed sturgeon life history and distribution in Wisconsin, followed by various regulations on the inland and Mississippi River (boundary waters) lake sturgeon populations. Joseph emphasized that you cannot target lake sturgeon outside the open hook and line season, and he noted the price of harvest tags for resident and non-resident

anglers, as well as there not being a need to purchase a tag to fish for sturgeon during the open hook and line season (catch and release). Mike Donofrio discussed regulations in the boundary waters of the Menominee River (WI-MI boundary), with mention of the series of 10 dams on the river.

Pat Short gave an overview of shovelnose sturgeon distribution nationwide and regulations in Wisconsin. Pat discussed morphometric characteristics and habitat preferences as well. Pat discussed the sport vs. commercial aspect of shovelnose sturgeon fishing (“dual purpose fishery”). Pat gave a breakdown of Mississippi River shovelnose sturgeon commercial and sport fishing regulations including nuances of commercial egg/roe harvest. He also touched on the open sport fishery in the lower Wisconsin River. Pat described the various saleable products that come from the commercial shovelnose fishery (roe, smoked flesh). USFWS Ashland rep jumped in and described the current Lake Superior lake sturgeon recreational fishery (open year round, 50” MLL). The advisory question from 2018 spring hearings was mentioned (50 MLL to 60MLL to match other harvest fisheries).

Ryan briefly described the current season and license structure for the Winnebago System spear fishery, as well as number of licenses sold per year. Ryan briefly described the information collected at spear fishing registration stations, as well as seasonal harvest caps and the groups that WDNR works with to set those caps each year. Ryan described that water clarity is the biggest predictor of spearing success, and that a lot of spearing regulations have been in response to particular situations that have arisen in the fishery over time.

Ryan described the timeline of the planning process (pp slide), as well as the kickoff meetings from this past winter and the lack of public interest thus far. Ryan touched on the fact that there will be some workload for all in between meetings. Ryan then moved into scheduling of future meetings, roughly on a once per month basis through December. Ryan asked if Stevens Point was acceptable as a central location, and also described the advantages of weekday afternoon meetings as opposed to evenings or weekends. Ryan asked if that worked for most people (weekday afternoons) and there was no opposition from the group. Ryan laid out the prospective dates for meetings for the remainder of the fall (9/27, 10/29, and December 4 from 1 to 4pm). Mike D. asked again if Stevens Point was acceptable as a central location. Ryan offered UWSP but noted parking issues. Ron Bruch offered Schmeeckle Reserve as a location, but there were concerns over the size of the room. ***ACTION ITEM-LOOK INTO SCHMEECKLE, ESPECIALLY MEETING ROOM SIZE.***

Brad Eggold mentioned we will strive to have meeting minutes up for all to view within a few days of a meeting so people have plenty of time to review before the next meeting. Ryan said anything of importance to the group would be posted to the dedicated sturgeon plan website. Mike D. reiterated that although we have 3 more meetings scheduled that does not mean that will be the only 3 meetings. We will evaluate need for more meetings as we go.

Jeff presented results from winter kickoff meetings from Feb-March 2018 including attendance at each and the nature of comments left by attendees. Participation in Winnebago spear fishery, hook and line fishing, both fisheries, or neither, as well as participation in other sturgeon related activities. He also presented a summary of the issues that attendees felt were most important with regards to current sturgeon management. This included ecological/habitat concerns, as well as a desire from hook and line anglers to see additional fishing opportunities or regulation changes (new waters, longer C&R season, bag limits, size limits, licenses, season structure, fishing methods). See pp slides for details.

Brian Klawitter (MN Guide) mentioned that this was the first he had heard of the kickoff meetings, and mentioned the lack of a meeting site in close proximity to the Twin Cities. He described how popular the St Croix is among Minnesota anglers and that had they known they may have had a lot of input. Jeff informed him this was not a wide-ranging survey and was offered to those who came to the meetings or chose to give feedback online. Ryan detailed the communication effort that was made prior to the kickoff meetings, and mentioned we could work with communications staff to reach more wide audience next time. **Brad Eggold detailed the Gov Gelivery system and encouraged spreading the word so that people subscribe to get updates and a wider audience can be reached.**

Mike D. described the 2000 plan and the issues that were most important at that time, as well a general description of the various accomplishments since the 2000 plan was written. A little more in-depth coverage was given to where the funding from inland management comes from vs. Winnebago system (and the fact that we could use more funding). Mike touched on sturgeon re-introductions, habitat enhancement, collaboration between agencies and interest groups. Ongoing research was described in general. Shovelnose were missing from the last plan but are included this time around.

BREAK @ 14:15

Meeting resumed at 14:38. Ryan had the attendees (non-DNR) number off by threes to form three groups for breakout sessions. The first topic was the Vision Statement, and Ryan showed examples from the 2000 LKS plan, Lake Michigan Management Plan, and Lake Superior Management Plan (ongoing). Twenty minutes was given for the exercise.

Visit statement exercise:

Group 1 (facilitated by Short, Shaw, Gerbyshak, Nye from WDNR/Sturgeon Team)
Incorporated best parts of 2000 statement, added “science based” and “promote”

"To effectively protect, restore, maintain and promote lake sturgeon and shovelnose sturgeon populations and habitat in Wisconsin using science based research and balanced management for the benefit of the resource itself and all its users"

Group 2 (facilitated by Donofrio, Scheirer, Eggold, Strom from WDNR/Sturgeon Team)

Best of 2000 statement plus expansion of additional ideas...

"To preserve, protect, enhance and restore Wisconsin sturgeon populations and their habitat, through science based management (1); regulations and enforcement (2); education and outreach (3) for the benefit of the sturgeon resource today tomorrow and forever."

Group 3 (facilitated by Jesse Landwehr, Ben Michaels, Justin Loehrke Koenigs from WDNR/ Sturgeon Team)

Similar to groups 1 and 2, added the word "habitat" and removed the direct reference to Lake Sturgeon in preference of a more general reference sturgeon that would incorporate multiple species. Definitely a common theme on how the groups arrived at their vision statement.

Issues exercise: (NOTE: pictures taken of white board for groups 1 and 2 for record, group 3 no whiteboard).

Group 1 (facilitated by Short, Shaw, Gerbyshak, Nye from WDNR/Sturgeon Team), votes on high, medium, and low priority saw WDNR members abstain from voting when those in group chose their top 3 issues from the list.

- Invasive species-3 votes
- Funding and feasibility (funding sources, fishing license, fee increase, other water users like canoe and kayak)-5 votes
- Habitat loss
- Fish passage (assessment, options, need...case by case)-2 votes
- Over exploitation
- Lack of public education: regulations, data behind them, ongoing survey work-6 votes
- Climate change issues...water temperature
- Misunderstandings about minimum length limit...regulations in general...falls under public education-1 vote
- Fishing methods (fair chase, camera use during spearing)
- Tribal relations and inclusion in management or lack thereof
- Priority waters for management/rehabilitation/restoration waters
- Stocking...maintain genetic/stock integrity and diversity (USFWS Ashland)...including why is this important (Ron)?-1 vote
- Contaminants/water quality, including microplastics...effects on sturgeon (USFWS Ashland)
- David Zielke-promote use of resource, also assessment of effectiveness of regulation
- New and emerging fish diseases including lack of quarantine facility in fish hatchery system...sturgeon herpes (Nate, Ron)- 1 vote

Group 2 (facilitated by Donofrio, Scheier, Eggold from WDNR/Sturgeon Team)

- High: law enforcement, population status, appropriate funding source/allocation, habitat restoration
- Others Medium: hook and line participation, fragmented habitat and populations (reconnecting versus NNIS control), Wisconsin/other states/tribal management cooperation, encourage advocacy (more Sturgeon for Tomorrow chapters)

Group 3 (facilitated by Strom, Oshkosh warden, Ben Michaels, Koenigs from WDNR/Sturgeon Team)

- High: assessment, monitoring, and evaluation. Habitat development. Funding. Habitat connectivity
- Med: Outreach and awareness, regulations/enforcement
- Low: Priority waters, angling opportunities
- Others: Aquaculture, bait harvest, barriers, invasives

Ryan began closing remarks at 15:57, asked the group if there were any topics that people felt like they needed more information on before progressing further in the process. Specifically mentioned were genetics and current hook & line regulations and how they came to be and when. Brad Eggold encouraged all to read the review of the 2000 plan. Ryan adjourned at 15:59.